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AUTHOR Ellis, E. N.
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ABSTRACT

The Secondary School Research Program devised a two-part Questionnaire for Students, Teachers and Administrators (QUESTA I and QUESTA II) to gather information about the attitudes, values and perceptions of these groups and the rate and extent to which they change. QUESTA I, administered to students when they enter high school, gathers baseline biographical, socioeconomic, demographic, and attitudinal information. It seeks the new student's attitudes toward himself, his peers, his previous school, his new school, and his hopes, fears, and aspirations. QUESTA II is administered during or at the end of any of the four years of high school to measure the impact of the school upon his attitudes and values. QUESTA II is also designed for administration to teachers and administrators. QUESTA can be used to facilitate understanding of relations between groups in a school and how the parts of the school interact and affect the educational process. The school's progress and educational environment can be improved if action is taken on the strengths and weaknesses revealed by QUESTA. A brief overview of the summary of responses of Templeton Secondary School to QUESTA is provided. (KM)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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August, 1972

E. N. Ellis

Research Report 72-25

Department of Planning and Evaluation
Board of School Trustees
1595 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver 9, B. C.

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THE SECONDARY SCHOOL RESEARCH PROGRAM EMPLOYING QUESTA, TEMPLETON SECONDARY SCHOOL 1971-72

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THE SECONDARY SCHOOL RESEARCH PROGRAM EMPLOYING QUESTA, TEMPLETON SECONDARY SCHOOL 1971-72

The Secondary School Research Program represents a cooperative attempt to measure the reality of school life as perceived by groups of students, teachers, and administrators. The program had its beginning in 1969 when representatives of the secondary school met with the staff of Educational Testing Service to develop a research program to gather information needed to make informed decisions for change. From these efforts there has come a two-part Questionnaire for Students, Teachers and Administrators (QUESTA I and QUESTA II).

QUESTA is:

- focused primarily on values, attitudes, levels of expectations, and satisfaction
- anonymously answered, with the resulting data organized by relevant groups rather than by individuals
- a mixture of questions some of which call for perceptions of the environment and others that call for responses about one's self
- action-oriented to produce information that will be useful in decision making
- longitudinal--it can be administered year after year, so that the speed and direction of change within a school can be measured

QUESTA is designed to:

- solicit more information about the attitudes of students toward their educational experiences
- facilitate the study of student change
- provide information about the attitudes, values, and perceptions of subgroups within the school, such as students, teachers, and administrators
- provide information that leads to constructive changes in programs, policies, and practices
- identify sources of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and tension within the school
- help define the school for itself and, as desired, aid the school in communicating with the public

- enable schools to compare themselves with each other in ways that could identify important differences

The Nature of the Instruments

QUESTA, as indicated above, is in two parts. The first, administered to students when they enter high school, gathers baseline biographical, socioeconomic, demographic, and attitudinal information. QUESTA I seeks to discover the student's attitudes toward himself, his peers, his previous school, his new school, and his hopes, fears, and aspirations. QUESTA I must be administered immediately after the student enters the school. QUESTA II, on the other hand, is ad ninistered during or at the end of the student's freshman, sophomore, or junior year, or at the end of his senior year, in order to measure the impact of the school upon his attitudes and values.

Much of the usefulness of this questionnaire depends on defining the values and attitudes of all groups in the school, not just students. For example, differences in perceptions, attitudes, and values among such subgroups as students, teachers, administrators, school board members, and trustees provide useful information about the nature of the school community. For this reason, QUESTA II also has separate sections applicable to different kinds of groups within the school community. By comparing the results of QUESTA I and QUESTA II, the total effect of the school on the student's attitudes and values may be measured.

How QUESTA Can Be Used

There are three general ways in which QUESTA information can be useful. First, it can aid in understanding the workings of the school environment, the relations between various subgroups, and how the parts of the school interact and affect the educational process. Second, objective information about the perceptions and evaluations of the people in the school can form the basis of discussions about the purposes, facilities, and direction of the school. Finally, such information can help identify the school's strengths and weaknesses, can monitor the progress of the school toward many of its objectives, and can thereby suggest actions to improve the school's educational environment.

Uses Among Schools

Comparing data among related groups of schools can be useful in several ways. Information about how purposes, characteristics, facilities, teaching, and student behaviour differ among schools can lead to insights about how schools function, and therefore how a single school functions. Comparative information can also help schools evaluate their own results.

Data among schools can also be applied to studies of functions or facilities in general, such as the quality of instruction or of extra-curricular programs. Such data can also help assess how student development and educational progress are affected by institutional characteristics.

Uses for Educational Research

Research based on QUESTA responses can identify the environmental features associated with various educational outcomes and conditions. Research with QUESTA may be able to identify the characteristics of subgroups that require different educational strategies. In general, this kind of research can describe the components of the environment and assess the stimulus power of the school.

When Should Each Instrument Be Administered?

It is recommended that QUESTA I be administered every year to all incoming students. The resulting data will provide a measure of changing values, attitudes, and expectations of entering students. Equally important, the use of QUESTA I data in connection with QUESTA II data will yield a measurement of attitudinal change during the period the students are in school.

Since QUESTA II is designed to elicit responses from teachers and administrators as well as students, a school must devise a plan that provides for teacher-administrator responses often enough to be fully useful (especially in comparison with student response), but not so often that teachers and administrators become irritated by it.

Scoring and Reporting

QUESTA is scored by Educational Testing Service in Berkeley, California, and all tabulation is performed by the ETS Princeton office.

The Use of QUESTA at Templeton Secondary School

QUESTA I was administered to 79 students (38 boys and 41 girls) enrolled in Grade 8 at Templeton Secondary School in September, 1971. A summary of the responses of this group to the items of the questionnaire was supplied to the principal. The computer print-out followed this outline:

Subject	Item No.	Page
1. Background Data	1-3, 4 (1-2) 5-7, 10	1- 3
2. How the Student sees Himself		
a. Sources of values	18 (1-13)	4- 5
b. Life goals	13 (1-17)	6- 8
c. Estimate of my abilities	17 (1-22)	9-12
d. Attitude towards cheating	19 (1- 6)	13
3. Parental Attitudes as seen by the Student	14 (1-14)	14-16
4. Reasons for Choosing the School		
a. Ideal choice	8 (1- 9)	17
b. Appealing characteristics of this school	9 (1-30)	17-21

Subject	Item No.	Page
5. Expectations of the School		
a. What I hope to learn	11 (1-23)	22-25
b. How I see myself in the school	12 (1-15)	25-27
c. How I see the school	15 (1-17)	28-30
d. Relations between racial, ethnic groups	16 (1-13)	31
e. School activities I look forward to	20 (1-15)	32-34
6. Local Option Questions (there were none)		35

QUESTA II was administered on May 29, 1972, to the same group of Grade 8 students as well as to twelve teachers and three administrators. It would appear from the computer print-out that four of the students were not coded correctly and their responses seem to have been included in "Non Student Total". For this reason I would suggest that data in that column be disregarded.

Herewith is an index to the computer print-out of the data from QUESTA II.

Subject	Item No.	Page
1. Background Data	1-7 (1-2) 8-13	1-4
2. General Satisfaction Level	14 (1, 19, 22)	5
3. Purposes of the School	15 (1-16) 16 (1-16) 14 (20)	6-11
4. Effects of the School on the Student	32 (1-16) 14 (21)	12-15
5. Personal Values and Life Goals	27 (1-14) 23 (1-11)	16-19
6. Personal Relations and Communications within the School	25 (1-8) 14 (3, 4)	20-22
7. Governance of the School	21 (1-7) 14 (2, 5, 15)	23-24
8. Perceptions of Change	20 (1-16)	25-28
9. Teachers in the Classroom	17 (1-17)	29-33
10. Grading	30 (1-12)	34-36
11. The Curriculum	14 (12, 13, 14, 17)	37

12.	The Arts	28 (1-7)	38-40
13.	Extra Curricular, including Athletics	14 (6-11, 16, 18)	41-42
14.	Counselling	29 (1-9) 19 (1-8) 31 (1-14)	43-51
15.	Relations between Racial, Ethnic Groups	18 (1-14)	52
16.	Pressures on the Student	24 (1-14)	53-55
17.	Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drugs	22 (1-11)	56-58
18.	Rules and Regulations	26 (1-29)	59-66
19.	Local Option Questions (there were none)		67

I believe that all three of the participating groups; students, teachers and administrators at Templeton Secondary School would derive some benefit from a careful analysis of the questionnaire summaries. Item 14 responses suggest that students are in general agreement that their school experiences have been good. There is some disagreement among the students and between the groups in regard to the adequate provision for personal privacy.

There was general agreement on the purposes of the school, however, there was some disparity among the responses of the three groups to the question about the emphasis that schools should give to helping students get into college. The section on personal values and life goals generated some interesting differences in regard to the importance of developing a philosophy of life (Item 27-3) and the importance of being of service to others (Item 27-7).

The sections on personal relations and communications was interesting because it revealed each group's perceptions of the relationships between the other two groups.

There was remarkable agreement of opinions regarding governance of the school and in the perceptions of change and grading practices.

The items relating to teacher behaviour in the classroom (Item 17) revealed some interesting differences in the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators.

Sponsors of extra curricular activities, art, drama, music and crafts may find it interesting to review student responses to Items 14 and 28.

The responses to Items 29 indicate that students are generally satisfied with counselling services and find them helpful.

Students, teachers and administrators agree that racial groups tend to treat each other fairly but there are some differences in their perceptions of these relationships.

Item 24 is particularly interesting in that teachers and administrators misjudge the extent to which students are bothered by some particular pressures. On the other hand, they are quite sensitive to student reaction to other pressures.

Students, teachers and principals tend to agree on the extent to which tobacco, alcohol and drugs are harmful. However, while teachers and administrators think that the school rules about smoking are not strict enough, more than a third of the students think that the school rules are too strict. Similarly, students tend to think regulations about cutting class and truancy, as well as discipline in the classroom, are too strict. However, the extent of agreement is impressive among the three groups regarding school rules and regulations.

NOTE: A copy of the computer print-out summarizing the responses is available on request for inspection in the office of the Department of Planning and Evaluation, Vancouver School Board.